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ABSTRACT

It is commonly thought that teacher educators enjoy mixed, if not poor, reputations among those with whom they interact in the course of their work. To assess this assumption, samples of teacher education preservice candidates, educational foundations faculty, liberal arts and sciences faculty and school teachers were asked to complete a survey questionnaire designed to elicit their ratings of teacher educators on six dimensions of reputation. The dimensions of reputation studied were credibility, knowledgeability in their specialty, general knowledgeability, effectiveness as teachers, status, and orientation to knowledge and research. Additional questionnaire items were developed to obtain information concerning the extent to which teacher educators are seen to be realistic versus idealistic. (Results are discussed, limits of the study are specified, and the survey instrumart is appended.) (Author/RH)

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REPUTATIONS OF TEACHER EDUCATORS AMONG MEMBERS OF THEIR ROLE-SET

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Reputations of Teacher Educators Among Members of Their Role Set

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Introduction

This study was addressed to the common impression that teacher educators enjoy mixed, if not poor, reputations among those with whom they interact in the course of their work (Nelli, 1982). Impressions seem to indicate they are often criticized by two of these groups for virtually opposite qualities: Students and school teachers fault teacher educators as excessively theoretical, (Buchanan, 1982) impractical (Lortie, 1975) and high-minded, while their colleagues on campus fault them for being too "arts and craftsy", atheroretical, ideological and non-empirical.

The study reported here is part of a larger research thrust by which we hope to improve out understanding of the conditions in which teacher educators work. The specific objectives of the study reported here were to survey samples of the groups with whom teacher educators interact to obtain preliminary data concerning what reputations these groups hold of them.

Theoretical Framework

The study was organized around Katz' (1981) theoretical framework that depicts the field of teacher education in terms of ten interacting categories of variables which both determine and constrain the events constituting teacher education. Three of the ten categories of variables identified for this study are: Characteristics of the Staff (of the teacher education program), Characteristics of the Candidates (i.e., students)

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and Characteristics of the Receiving Profession (i.e., school teachers).

Dimensions of reputation. Six dimensions of reputation were selected for study and are defined as follows:

1. Credibility

   The extent to which teacher educators appear to "know what they are talking about," are believed to be actually capable of teaching in schools in the ways they advocate and train their preservice students to teach, etc.

2. Knowledgeability in their Speciality

   The extent to which teacher educators are believed to "know their subject" (compared to instructors' knowledge of their subject in other disciplines).

3. General Knowledgeability

   The extent to which teacher educators are believed to be widely and well read, erudite, learned and so forth beyond just their own speciality.

4. Effectiveness as Teachers

   The extent to which teacher educators are reputed to be effective as teachers of their college students (compared to faculty in other disciplines).

5. Status

   Rankings given by role-set members to teacher educators on prestige, status and respect as compared to other college instructors or socially significant others.

6. Orientation to Knowledge and Research

   This dimension is somewhat different from those listed above in that it addresses less obvious and observable aspects of professional conduct. It was based on the work of Freidson (1970) and Pickle (1980) concerning the differences between the way sub-groups within a profession respond to research and knowledge. These two orientations, labeled clinical and scientific, consist of five inter-related continua as follows:

a. reflective-active, - suggesting that the scientific orientation is characterized by a tendency to reflection and the clinical by the tendency to act or seek action, or prefer action, even in the absence of sufficient data.

b. conceptual-pragmatic, - suggesting that the scientific orientation includes the desire to grasp the concepts that explain relevant phenomena and to understand why things work, whereas the clinical orientation is the search for what "works", whether the explanations are available or not.

c. theoretical-subjective, - suggests that the scientific orientation includes concern for building systems of understandings and concepts whereas the clinician places heavy reliance on first hand knowledge and personal experience and accepts conceptual systems if they correspond to subjective impressions.

d. skepticism-faith, the scientific orientation includes concern for the robustness of data or evidence, the appropriateness of the sampling and generally applies the canons of empirical methods to knowledge and information; the clinician feels the need to believe in the rightness of a treatment or response and to believe that the course of action chosen will do more harm than good and thus to be able to proceed with confidence.

e. determinacy-indeterminacy, - the scientific orientation includes seeking the lawfulness of phenomena from which the ability to reproduce findings, effects and treatments reliably can be derived; the clinical orientation includes the belief that cause-effect relationships may be lawful but cannot be determined in the complexities of "real world" events, they cannot be isolated or controlled in actual practice.

Using these five continua, 10 items were constructed and are shown in the appendix. Dimension (a) is indicated in items 8 and 17; (b) in 10 and 15; (c) in 6 and 13, (d) in 9 and 14 and (e) in 7 and 11. Items numbers 12 and 16 were developed to obtain information concerning the extent to which teacher educators are seen to be realistic versus idealistic.

The Role-Set of Teacher Educators

Using Merton's concept of role-set, i.e., the complement of role-taker groups associated with a given occupation or profession (see Merton, 1968, pp. 422-438), a collection of categories of interacting role-taker groups that complement the teacher educators' role was defined and identified. The role-set included the following groups: students in a teacher education preservice program; school teachers currently employed; professors of education in foundation fields and not primarily engaged in the teaching pedagogy or methods classes, and professors of humanities and of sciences.

Samples

Samples of teacher education preservice candidates, educational foundation faculty, liberal arts and sciences faculty and school teachers were asked to complete a survey questionnaire designed to elicit their ratings of teacher educators on six dimensions of reputation as outlined above. (A copy of the survey is attached.)

The sample of students was drawn from those enrolled in elementary and secondary education preservice programs at a large midwestern university. The faculty members were sampled from the departments of Educational Foundations, Humanities and Sciences respectively from a large midwestern university also. The fifth group consisted of a sample of elementary school teachers in a small industrial metropolitan city in the upper midwest.

Table 1 shows the numbers in the populations, samples and the rate of usable returns of the survey questionnaire.

(Table 1 about here)

Scoring the Survey

Items 1 and 2 focus on characteristics of the populations surveyed, and hence did not require scoring.

Items 3 (a, b, c, d, e), 4 and 5 were scored by assigning numerical values to all the possible choices (high, same/medium, and low) and determining raw scores by multiplying frequency of responses by the numerical "same" rating a value of 2, and "low" a value of 1. The "not sure" responses were dropped from the final calculations. For each of t

five samples, students, teachers, educational foundations faculty, humanities and science faculty, mean ratings were determined for individual dimensions of reputations of teacher educators: credibility, knowledgeability in speciality, general knowledgeability, effectiveness as teachers, and status (Highest mean score possible = 3). Table 2 thus presents data from questions 3, 4, and 5.

Principal Results

1. Overall, students assigned higher ratings to the reputations of teacher educators summed across such dimensions of reputation as credibility, knowledgeability in their specialty, general knowledge beyond their speciality, effectiveness as teachers of college students, and status than did the other persons in the role set surveyed in this study (viz. teachers, education foundations faculty, humanities and science faculties).

2. Overall, professors of humanities and sciences assigned lower values to the reputations of teacher educators across all the dimensions of reputation than did the other role groups in the set.

3. Overall, teacher educators were rated lowest on the reputational dimensions of special and general knowledge. They were rated highest on the dimension of effectiveness as teachers.

4. Overall, the reputations of teacher educators among students is more homogeneous than among the other role-set groups.

Discussion

A major objective of the study reported here was to be able to describe some aspects of the contexts in which teacher educators work. One aspect of the work context is the reputations colleagues have of each other. It is reasonable to assume that a work environment in which colleagues enjoy good reputations would be pleasant, satisfying and even perhaps energizing. Contrarily, it must be disheartening to be surrounded by colleagues who regard your group as incompetent or as "losers". Of the thirty-five (35) cell means reported in Table 2, approximately two-thirds fall at or below two (2) on a three point scale. These ratings, to say the least, are not encouraging.

Several persistent concerns about the contexts in which teacher educators work gave rise to the research reported here. One already mentioned is the potential effect poor reputations might have upon role performance itself and job satisfaction (as well as potential for success in the competition for scarce resources). We now know from the data at hand that indeed, teacher educators' reputations among four role groups (students, school teachers, foundations faculty, humanities and science faculty) are not very positive. What effects these have on the work of teacher educators were not examined in this study.

Another concern was that attributions made to teacher educators by one group in the set might be opposite to those made by another. Thus, for example, students and school teachers might dismiss teacher educators as high-minded, impractical, idealistic, too theoretical or even scientific; whereas their colleagues on campus might attribute to them exactly the opposite qualities. This concern led to our interest in the two contrasting "Orientations to Knowledge" derived from Freidson's study of the sociology of knowledge in the field of medicine (1970). On the other hand, when teachers attribute a

Scientific Orientation to teacher educators, it carries with it a "put-down" meaning, implying little credibility, a certain quality of being "out of touch" with the way things really are, distancing the teacher educators from the so-called "grass roots" where the "action really is" (cf. Buchanan, 1982). If the humanities and science faculty attribute the Scientific Orientation to teacher educators, it is likely to carry a different meaning. It might perhaps signify that teacher educators are true faculty peers to be accorded the respect due to all other scholars or academics. On the other hand the attribution of a Clinical Orientation made by faculty colleagues would very likely carry a similar kind of "put down" significance, indicating that perhaps teacher educators do not really belong to academe or fail to measure up to campus norms of a scholarly orientation and behavior. However this very same attribution of Clinical Orientation made by students and school teachers might signify camaraderie, collegiality and respect for their know-how, practicality, sensitivity to the realities of school life, etc. We attempted to capture these two Orientations to Knowledge in items 6 through 17 on our questionnaire. Unfortunately the analyses of these data have not yet been completed. We hope also that our colleagues will want to try to find ways to test some of the hypotheses of interest to us. Our predictions concerning the occurence of these two orientations (at least for an R & D type of campus) include the following:

1. School teachers attribute a Scientific orientation to Knowledge to teacher educators while university colleagues perceive them as Clinical in orientation.

2. Students are likely to assign teacher educators somewhere in the middle range between Scientific and Clinical Orientations in that they are likely to see them as more clinical than most of their other university professors and more scientific than the cooperating teachers to whom they are exposed.

3. Classroom teachers who rate teacher educators high on the first five dimensions of reputation (Credibility, Knowledgeability, etc.) tend to see them as more Clinical than Scientific in Orientation to Knowledge.

4. Faculty Colleagues who rate teacher educators high on the first five dimensions of reputation tend to see them as more Scientific than Clinical in Orientation to Knowledge.

It is interesting to speculate how these preditions might vary as they are re-formulated for other academic settings, e.g. small private liberal arts four-year colleges, monotechnic versus polytechnic institutions, and so forth. If our hunches about the ways the different role-set groups see teacher educators' Orientation to Knowledge, and they are empirically supported, the implications for teacher education and teacher educators would seem to be rather serious. Further speculation must await the data analyses we anticipate in the near future.

Finally, we attempted to ascertain the perceptions of teacher educators' role-set groups using a questionnaire reflecting the constructs "scientific" and "clinical" along separate dimensions. We might have been more successful at obtaining the perceptions if we had sought over-all judgments rather than summing judgments on twelve items based on five continua. Further research using direct semi-standard interview techniques may be more effective in yielding the information we are seeking concerning how others see the educators of teachers.

Delimitations

1. The data reported herein are the results of pilot study efforts. In these efforts we found several deficiencies in the data gathering instruments we developed. These require us to be tentative in interpreting the results.

2. The student and campus colleague samples were drawn from a large R & D university. The pattern of results we obtained may be different in other teacher education contexts.

3. The self-report nature of the questionnaire can contribute to the superficiality or artificiality of the data. The number of respondents who used the "Not Sure" categories and/or who left items completely blank was so large as to further undermine our confidence in the findings. We are seeking ways of incorporating interview protocols into a survey in order to probe respondents' thinking more deeply.

4. The higher ratings given by students may well reflect a tendency on their parts to be acquiescent in pencil-paper type situations. Our pilot questionnaire did not take into account this potential source of response bias.

5. We have reported differences in means without rigorous analytic tests for significance. Some of the differences we have reported may be more reasonably attributed to chance than to differences among groups in the role-set.

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Table 1. Showing Populations and Samples Employed in the Survey

	Population	Sample	No. Returned	% Returned	No. Usable	% Usable
Students	El. Ed. 406 / Sec. Ed. 82	El. Ed. 67 / Sec. Ed. 39	106	100%	106	100%
Teachers	400	100	62	62%	35	35%
Foundations Faculty	70	70	39	55.7%	11	16%
Liberal Arts	430	150	54	36%	Humanities 21	30%
and Sciences Faculty	447				Sciences 24	

Dimensions of Reputation	Students N=106	Teachers N=35	Educational Foundations Faculty N=11	Liberal Arts & Sciences Faculty N=24	N=21
	No. Responses=659	No. Responses= 199	No. Responses=62	No. of Responses= 88	81
				Science	Humanities
1. Credibility					
a. Do ideas work?	2.51 (105)	1.77 (35)	2.00 (9)	1.71 (14)	1.68 (16)
b. Could they implement what they advocate?	2.36 (97)	1.68 (32)	1.87 (8)	1.87 (8)	2.00 (12)
2. Knowledgeability in Speciality	2.18 (101)	2.00 (28)	2.00 (9)	1.75 (12)	1.90 (10)
3. General Knowledgeability	2.24 (77)	2.04 (22)	1.88 (9)	1.10 (10)	1.55 (9)
4. Effectiveness as Teachers	2.53 (96)	1.96 (29)	2.22 (9)	1.90 (11)	2.00 (9)
5. Status					
a. Esteem	2.42 (100)	1.96 (32)	1.88 (9)	1.62 (16)	1.46 (13)
b. Potential Contribution	2.37 (83)	1.85 (21)	1.66 (9)	1.82 (17)	1.66 (12)
Overall Mean on Reputation	2.13 (105)	1.53 (35)	1.71 (10)	1.18 (18)	1.11 (18)
s.d.	.49	.65	.60	.68	.73

Table 2. Showing the Mean Ratings on Five Dimensions of Reputation by Teacher Educators' Role-Set

APPENDIX

TEACHER EDUCATION SURVEY

Please check the items that describe your position, work setting and educational attainment:

Position	Location/Level	Educational Attainment
__Professor	__University	__Freshman
__Teacher	__College (Specify	__Sophomore
__Administrator	Department_____)	__Junior
__Student	__High School	__Senior
	__Junior High	__BA
	__Elementary School	__MA
	__Preschool	__Ph.D.
		__Ed.D.
		__Advanced Certificate

DIRECTIONS:

The purpose of this survey is to learn more about the contexts in which those who prepare teachers work. In particular, we want to know how you view teacher educators, e.g., those who teach methods courses and supervise student teaching. We understand that you may not know faculty members in teacher education programs very well; however we would appreciate your sharing your impressions.

1. How would you describe your own contact with members of the College of Education's faculty?

   _____At least once per week

   _____At least once per month

   _____At least once per semester

   _____Hardly ever

   _____Never

2. How would you characterize contacts that you do have with the College of Education faculty?

_____Mostly work related

_____Mostly in social settings

_____Through family members involved in the field

_____Personal experience in Education courses

_____Mixture of the above

3. Based on your general impressions of the University scene, how would you compare those who teach methods courses and supervise student teachers on the College of Education faculty with other faculty groups on campus on each of the following characteristics:

	About the same as other faculty groups.	Generally higher than other faculty groups.	Generally lower than other faculty groups.	Not sure.
a) Effectiveness as teachers				
b) Knowledgeability in their own special areas of study.				
c) General knowledgeability beyond their own areas.				
d) Extent to which you hold them in high regard or esteem.				
e) Potential for making significant contributions as members of a campus-wide committee dealing with issues of long-range planning, budgets, and goals.				

4. Based on your own impressions of the teacher educators in the College of Education, to what extent do you think that they offer ideas and techniques that will <u>really</u> work in the schools?

_____To a great extent

_____Somewhat

_____Very little

5. Using your own impressions as a guide, how would you rate the teacher education faculty in terms of their ability to actually implement their own ideas and recommendations?

_____High

_____Medium

_____Low

_____Not sure

<u>Directions for questions 6 through 17</u>: The statements below describe behaviors that are observed from time to time in most professionals. Based on your own impressions, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement in terms of its accuracy in describing those faculty in the Colleges of Eduction who are responsible for preparing teachers.

	Strongly Agree.	Agree	?	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. Teacher educators tend to accept first hand experience as a main source of valuable insight.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
7. Teacher educators tend to believe that real school problems are too complex or unique to be solved by educational generalizations or principles.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____

	Strongly Agree.	Agree	?	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. Teacher educators tend to respond to educational problems thoughtfully by suggesting several alternative courses of action.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
9. Teacher educators tend to put great value on the soundness of their own intuitions.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
10. Teacher educators tend to evaluate educational practices more in terms of whether they work than in terms of their side effects, costs, or value assumptions.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
11. Teacher educators tend to react to educational problems by seeking generalizations and principles that apply to them.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
12. Teacher educators tend to be in close touch with the realities of daily school life.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
13. Teacher educators tend to relate theories to educational problems to improve understandings and make better predictions.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
14. Teacher educators tend to be suspicious of recommended practices without research evidence to support them.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
15. Teacher educators tend to wonder how things work instead of whether they work.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
16. Teacher educators tend to think about school settings in idealistic and utopian ways.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____
17. Teacher educators prefer to act promptly on problem situations rather than to dwell at length on the consideration of alternatives.	1____	2____	3____	4____	5____